

INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION REPORT

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S-E-C-R-E-T

COUNTRY Hungary

REPORT NO. EAV-5862

SUBJECT Istvan Kovacs

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REFERENCES

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SOURCE EVALUATIONS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE. NOTE FOREGOING EXPLANATION.

SOURCE: Hungarian emigre (B). Appraisal of Content: 2.

1. Istvan Kovacs, a prominent Hungarian Communist Party official during the Rakosi period, was born Jeno Rómer in about 1906. He obtained little formal education and learned the trade of an upholsterer. In his youth he joined the trade union movement and through it came into contact with the illegal Communist Party of Hungary. He soon became one of the leaders of the Party's youth movement and before the outbreak of World War II was considered one of the leaders of the Party as a whole. In illegal Party circles he used the name Istvan Kovacs and retained it after World War II. During the last phase of the war he was arrested and incarcerated in Budapest's Margit Körut military prison.
2. At the beginning of 1945 Matyas Rakosi took Kovacs into his entourage and placed him in charge of Party organizational matters as a deputy to Mihaly Farkas. During the same year he became a member of the Party's Central Committee. In 1946 he became a reserve member of the Politburo. Adaptable, forceful, and hard-working, Kovacs was one of the most trusted and respected members of the Party hierarchy.
3. At the end of 1945 Kovacs married a Hungarian woman named Ilona Visontai who had spent her years of exile in Moscow. Soon after their marriage both Kovacs and his wife entertained extramarital affairs. During 1948 Kovacs plunged wholeheartedly into the anti-Tito campaign. Despite the fact that after Rakosi, Ernő Gerő, Farkas, and Jozsef Bevai, Kovacs was considered the most powerful figure in the Party leadership, he never held any government position. In 1955 he was considered the Party's staunchest Stalinist.
4. When the October 1956 revolution first broke out, Kovacs did nothing to oppose the developments and appeared to support the changes. After the first few days, however, he left for Moscow. In May 1959 it was reported that he had returned to Hungary and was working in a subordinate position in one of the government ministries.
5. Kovacs is a husky, corpulent man with jovial manners and a pleasant appearance. He is a good organizer, quick-thinking and decisive, but he lacks the power of independent thought. He is considered to be an insincere opportunist, ready to serve the authorities currently in power.

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